*

· A Breat Fight

*

Rev. J. W. McIlvaine, D.D.
Calvary
Episcopal Church
Pittsburgh



This sermon made a deep impression upon the people of Calvary Church. The contribution on Tuberculosis Sunday, which last year was \$70, this year was nearly \$4,000. It is printed by the Tuberculosis League in the hope that other Ministers may investigate the work, and give their people information about it.

A Great Fight

"So the plague was stayed from the children of Israel." Numbers xxv. 8.

The greatest foe of humanity, the greatest scourge of the human race is tuberculosis. It is without exaggeration called "the Great White Plague." It causes more sickness, suffering, poverty, death than any other single cause. Smallpox, diphtheria, typhoid and yellow fever, cancer, diabetes, appendicitis, meningitis, all combined barely claim as many victims as tuberculosis. One death out of every eight results from this cause. A hundred and fifty thousand die of it annually in this country, and half a million are following hard in their steps. Dr. Osler estimates it at a million and a half. Of the people now living in our land five millions are doomed to die from this one cause. It would take the population of twelve states of the Union to equal those who die from tuberculosis in one generation. War with its horrors, its frightful destruction of life and property is a minor evil beside it. It causes more suffering, death, financial loss in a single century than all the wars of human history.

It is especially the foe, the scourge, the destroyer of the poor. It is the poor man's disease. Seven-eighths of those who die from it are of the wage earning class; only one-eighth from the more well-to-do. There are two sayings regarding it, one is: "The rich may die of

tuberculosis, but the poor must." The other: "The rich may recover from tuberculosis, but the poor never." In many departments of labor, engravers, printers, jewelers, brass, stone, glass, leather workers, spinners and weavers, workers in silk, wool, worsted in our mills and factories, cigar makers, cab drivers, letter carriers, who are especially exposed to the dust, the mortality is from 31 to 66 per cent.

It is especially the disease of the young, of the young man and woman. Few die from it in infancy, few in old age. Up to fifteen years the mortality is very slight. From 15 to 20 it increases with frightful rapidity, more than five fold; from 20 to 30, nine fold. The average age of death is for men 37 years, for women 33, for both 35. Think of it; five millions living in our land today doomed to die in the flower of their manhood and womanhood at

the average age of 35.

On the lowest basis of all, the economic one, the financial loss to the country is beyond the grasp of imagination. If we assume that those who die from tuberculosis at the average age of 35 would otherwise live out their days, it means an average loss of 30 years for each, and this in the most productive period of life, when the education and preparation of life is completed, and the efficiency not seriously impaired. If we suppose that three-fourths of them are from the wage earning class, and the value of their earnings three hundred dollars a year, the loss to the country is \$1,000,000,000 annually, or \$30,000,000,000 in a generation. These are not wild guesses, but the result of careful study of facts and statistics by Professor Fisher, Professor of Political Economy in Yale University.

This does not take into consideration the suffering, the sorrow, the disappointment, the breaking down of hopes, the failing strength, the impoverishment of the family, and the lingering approach of death, which make tuberculosis the saddest thing on earth. When I came to this city, a stranger, the first persons in the parish who came to see me were a young man and his mother. He was the son of a college professor, a graduate of Cornell, with a good position and salary in the Westinghouse Company, but he was already in the grasp of the foe. For two years he managed with failing strength to keep on with his work, and then was compelled to give up everything and go to California. The last that I heard of him he was largely dependent upon others. It is a sad case and many of you have sympathized with it, and yet a happy one compared with that of the man with wife and children dependent upon his labors, compelled by love to toil on for their sakes until too late, and then to lie down and die leaving them to the cold charities of the world.

Let me read to you an extract from the New York Times of last week:

"Breath—breath—give me breath!"

A Yiddish whisper on a night in April, 1903, from the heart of the New York Ghetto. At 18 Clinton street, back in the rear tenement, a young Roumanian Jew lay dying of consumption. I had come in with a Jewish doctor. With every breath I felt the heavy, foul odor from poverty, ignorance, filth, disease. In this room ten feet square six people lay on the floor packed close, rubbing the heavy sleep from tired eyes, and staring at us dumbly. Two small windows gave them air from a noisome court, a pit twenty feet across and five floors deep. The other room was only a closet six feet by seven, with a grated window high up opening on an airshaft eighteen inches wide.

- 3 -

And in that closet four more were sleeping, three on a bed, one in a cradle.

"Breath—breath—give me breath."

The man's disease was infectious, and yet for two long weeks he had lain here dying. From his soiled bed he could touch the one table where the two families ate; the cooking stove was but six feet from him; the cupboard over his pillow; he could even reach one of the cradles where his baby girl lay staring, frightened at his strange position. For his wasted body was too feeble to rise; too choked, too tortured to lie down. His young wife held him up while the sleepers stared silently on, and that Yiddish whisper came over and over again, but now with a new and more fearful meaning:

"Breath—breath—or kill me! Oh, kill me!"
Two years ago this man had come to America
—one of the 488,000 in 1901. He had come
young and well and hopeful, with his wife and
their baby son. Two more had been born since
then. It was to be a new country, a new home,
a fresh start, a land to breathe in.

"Breath-breath-give me breath!"

He had breathed no air here but the close, heavy air of the sweatshop from 6 in the morning until 10 at night. Sometimes—he whispered—he worked on until 11. In New York today and tonight are over 50,000 like him working. And late in the night, when he left the feverish labor, at the hour when other homes are sleeping, he had come into the foul court and had sunk into restless sleep in the dark closet six feet by seven. There are 361,-000 such closets in the city. And this was home.

"Luft-Giebt mir luft."

He spoke only Yiddish. The new country had given the Plague before the language. For

the sweatshop and closet had made him weak; his weakened body could make no fight; the Plague came in and fed swiftly. Still on through the winter he had worked over the machine in the sweatshop, infecting the garments he sewed—feverish, tired, fearful—to buy food and coal, to keep his "home" alive. And now on this last day of life he had whispered to his brother, begging him to care for his wife and their three little children.

The struggle now is ended. The home is scattered. The smothered whisper is forever hushed.

"Breath-breath-give me breath!"

There are 30,000 registered cases of tuberculosis in Greater New York and an estimated

20,000 unregistered."

Why, you ask, harrow our hearts with such painful thoughts? Life is sad and we know it, and we come here for comfort and help and hope to face it, to hear the Gospel of Divine pity and love, not the words of despair. Yes, and do you think I would ever speak to you of the evils and miseries of sin if there were no Savior, no salvation, no way of escape. Ah, no. It is because there is a Savior from sin. a Gospel of salvation, a way of life, that I sometimes speak to you of sin that I may point you to the Savior. And it is because there is a gospel for the consumptive, there is salvation from the foe, there is a way of escape from death and the grave that I venture to speak as I have done. The gospel that medical science preaches today is, that tuberculosis in large measure is preventable; that taken in time it is curable. This gospel like the Gospel of Christ is a very simple one. It is the gospel of God's sunshine, God's pure air, of nourishing food and reasonable rest. It is in the darkness of the crowded tenement, in the dust of

the factory, the mill, the sweatshop, in the impoverished vitality of the overworked, underfed body that this foe of humanity does its deadly work. Give to the doomed millions God's sunshine by day, and His pure air by night, give them room to breathe, and food and rest for their tired bodies, and they need not die, one-half of them will assert their right to live out their days. You have this gospel, you know these facts. For the want of this knowledge thousands are dying and must die. What have you done, what are you doing to carry this gospel in the name of Him who came to heal the sick as well as to save the sinner, to those who are perishing for want of it?

The most wonderful work of this wonderful age is the control and elimination of the great diseases, which for thousands of years have ravaged the world. Plague and pestilence, cholera and smallpox, typhoid and yellow fever, instead of carrying off one-half of the human race, have been almost extinguished. Now the fight is on with the greatest foe of all, and already its progress is checked. With an increasing population there is a diminishing death rate from this cause. New York City in fifteen years has reduced its death rate from tuberculosis one-half. Massachusetts in a longer time has done the same. In England the gain is still greater. There is no question whatever that it can be reduced from one-half to three-fourths. One-half, possibly threefourths of the five millions in our land now doomed may yet be saved. The causes are known, the remedies are known; with the removal of the causes and the application of the remedies the result will always be proportionate.

Let us not, however, be too optimistic. We must not underestimate the opposing forces.

We may not think that any such result will come of itself, without the effort, the help, the sacrifices of all who love their fellowmen. All that is bad in our civilization enters into the tuberculosis problem, all the forces of evil are working in line with it,-intemperance, prostitution, impurity, dust, dirt, filth of every kind. poverty, ignorance, greed, inhumanity, the adulteration of food, the congestion of cities, the speed of life, the demands of toil all combine for its increase. Such an awful combination can be met and overcome only by the combination, the concentration of all the forces, powers, agencies for good in the world,—the State, the city, the home the Church, the Sunday school and day school, the philanthropic and charitable societies, the labor unions, the fraternal orders, the insurance companies are all deeply concerned, if they did but know it, and all must help; and then there must be the individual help of every man, woman and child who is on the side of God and humanity. It is a great fight, the greatest since the Son of God came and fought the fight with sin and death. It needs your sympathy, your help-

What then are we doing in this city to meet this evil? What kind of a fight are we making against this foe? I wish I could close this service here and now, and that this congregation could go with me on a little expedition. Some of you would take the street cars on Center Avenue, get off at Bedford and Herron Avenue, and walk half a mile up Herron Hill. Others would take your motor cars and halfway down Grant Boulevard turn to the left up Herron Avenue for half a mile to the corner of Bedford and Wandless Streets. Here on a high bluff looking down on the smoky city are four acres of ground with the hospital and dispensary of the Tuberculosis League. The

main building, the old McConway mansion, with some twenty-five rooms, and a double piazza surrounding the house, is for advanced cases. This is the most important factor in the problem. Two of the highest authorities in the world on the subject, Doctor Koch of Germany, the discoverer of the bacillus, and Doctor Newsholme of England, when asked what they thought had done the most for the great reduction of tuberculosis in Germany and England answered in almost the same words: "The hospital for advanced cases is the greatest single factor." Newsholme writes: "Segregation is the only factor that has varied constantly with the death rate. It must therefore be regarded as having exerted a more powerful influence on the prevention of tuberculosis than any of the other factors, none of which have varied constantly with the death rate." In the home, the school, the office, the workshop, the store, the street, the street car, and the railway train such patients are sources of infection. They may be told a hundred times of the danger of spreading the disease, but too often from carelessness, from indifference, even from maliciousness, they go about scattering the germs that are wafted by the winds everywhere. They are wanted nowhere else. The hospitals will not have them, the sanitoriums refuse them, private practitioners are anxious to get rid of them, homes and boarding houses drive them out with little compunction. With the exception of this little hospital there is no place in this great city, with eleven hundred deaths from tuberculosis annually, and three thousand advanced cases, for the patient without means to go except the poorhouse. At St. Barnabas' Home near Mc-Keesport, provision has been made for a few men through the generosity of a member of -8this parish; the next nearest place is Mount Alto, beyond Harrisburg. Last week I paid twenty-four dollars from your alms fund to send one of the communicants of the parish there. Two years ago another, too ill to go by herself, was taken there by our parish nurse, a woman with a husband and little child whose case was apparently hopeless. After a time she became depressed, homesick, longing to see her child; through the gift of two ladies of the parish the nurse was able to take the little boy to see her, and she was reconciled to remain another year. She now is at home apparently cured, able to go on with her work. Comparatively few advanced cases can recover, but at least they can be kept from being dangerous to others, and have every care and comfort and chance for their life. Last June when visiting the hospital I was taken into a room where a young girl 14 years old was lying, and the doctor said to me: "She has not a friend in the world except your parish nurse, who brought her here, and she thinks there is no one in the world like her." When I mentioned her name the girl's face brightened, and she said: "I love Miss Hull." As we went out of the room I asked the doctor if she would get better; he shook his head and said, "too late." During the summer she passed away, visited constantly by our nurse, and on the last day, almost with her last breath, she said. "Goodby, dear Miss Hull."

Beside the main building there are five "shacks," completely open on one side, each with eight beds for cases that are not advanced and are curable. One was built by Mr. Wallace Rowe, one by Mrs. Alexander Laughlin, Jr., one by the West Penn Hospital, one by the Allegheny General, and one by the Mercy Hospital, at a cost of \$1,200 each. Here the

patients lie day and night in the open air, drinking in the sun when it shines, fed with nourishing food, and the most of them in from six to eighteen months are returned to their homes, if they have them, cured, but still needing care and supervision. It is a mistake to think that the tuberculosis patient cannot recover in Pittsburgh, that the poor man who cannot afford to go to Colorado or Arizona must despair. The smoke which is so unfavorable in pneumonia is not harmful to tuberculosis, and the record of recoveries in Pittsburgh will compare favorably with those of

any other locality.

Then there is the Dispensary, a fine building erected at the cost of \$7,000 by the Dispensary Aid Society, a group of some fifteen young women, some of whom I am proud to say are members of this parish. Here anyone can come for medical examination and advice, parents can bring their children, and from it the visiting nurses go to the homes of the people with their knowledge and help. A branch has been established on the South Side, and there ought to be one in every part of the city where tuberculosis is prevalent, within easy reach of all who need it. There is also the night camp, where those who are able to work by day can come and sleep under favorable conditions. There is the farm where those who are able to work a little can gain strength to do more, and with its fourteen hundred chickens and twenty-two cows provides the needed supplies for the hospital. There is the educational bureau which by means of lectures, addresses, circulars pamphlets in every language aims to spread through the city the knowledge so much needed.

Most important and essential of all is the work for children. Tuberculosis gains lodg-

ment in early life. The investigations of Von Pirquet at Vienna show that ninety per cent of children, especially the children of the poor. already harbor its germs. In by far the most cases they remain latent unless overstudy. overwork, bad air or food lower the powers of resistance, and cause them to break out. The State of Illinois recently undertook to determine the loss to the State of money spent on the education of children who die before their eighteenth year. It was \$1,200,000 annually. The National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis has issued a statement that the United States pays annually \$7,500,000 for the education of children who die before they can make any return to the State for their educa-This is the valuation that the State puts upon them, but if we estimate the value to the fathers and mothers even billions would not suffice. There are over one million children in our public schools today who must die of tuberculosis unless something is done to save them. The Hebrew Benevolent Society has given \$5.000 to build a children's ward in connection with the hospital, and when it is built it will be the only building in the city where children with tuberculosis are received. There is at present only the open air school, the second in the country, where children with tuberculosis can continue their education while recovering from the disease. They come at nine o'clock in the morning, are met with a glass of hot milk, have another at ten, at twelve a nourishing luncheon, and another glass of milk before they go home. The little work that they do helps their recovery, and they are kept from spreading the disease in the public schools. There is immense need of medical examination in all the schools, and of public instruction. Here ignorance is not bliss, but ignorance is

death. One of the staff of the hospital spends her whole time visiting the schools and talking with the children and teachers. In a single year she visits all the schools, speaks to 26,000 children and 800 teachers, distributes 25,000 pamphlets and picture books, which the children carry back to their homes, while the visiting nurses go constantly into the homes to give instruction and care. This is especially important in regard to babies. Eleven per cent of tuberculosis is caused by impure milk, and a much larger proportion by improper care. A vast amount of tuberculosis could be saved by proper care of the babies.

We have not yet come to the greatest and best feature of the work, the example and inspiration to other cities. Pittsburgh has the honor of being a pioneer in this most important work of the century, pointing out the way for others to follow, a beacon light in the path of progress. Today in a score of cities work of a similar character is going on which owes its inception and inspiration to this work in our city. Boston sent a representative to the Secretary of the National Association to ask where the best information on the subject could be secured, and he was told to go to Pittsburgh and study the work there. Cincinnati did the same. Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Baltimore, Washington, Louisville have in the main adopted our plan, and some have gone far beyond us because better sustained. Letters have been received from Canada, England, Austria, Germany, Russia, New Zealand asking for information. Tuberculosis Sunday, which originated here, has become a national institution.

The trouble is that the work is painfully limited by the extent of its resources. In a city of three-quarters of a million inhabitants,

where eleven hundred die annually of tuberculosis, and there are three thousand cases needing the treatment which the highest authorities in the world have pronounced the most important factor in the reduction of the disease. there are less than fifty beds for advanced cases, outside the poorhouse. In the State of Pennsylvania, with five thousand deaths annually, and fifteen thousand cases, there are less than eight hundred beds in all the institutions of the State, where patients without means can be received. The State and city must come to the help of the churches and charities for economic reasons if for no other, The Board of Health estimates the annual loss to this city from tuberculosis at over \$4,000,-000, and a loss to the State of \$32,000,000. The State is slowly, very slowly, awakening to the need. It will awake and respond only as the people awake and show their interest. State of New York is spending \$101,000,000 for the deepening of the Erie Canal, when \$1,-000,000 might save the lives of a thousand citizens and children. Why? Because enough people are interested in the deepening of the Erie Canal and show their interest to make it a popular and politic thing to do. The City of New York, with ten thousand deaths annually, and fifty thousand cases, with an annual loss from this cause of a hundred millions is spending a thousand million dollars on its subways and surface roads, and half a million for the prevention and cure of tuberculosis. Why? Because the people want and demand transportation facilities, and are indifferent to the far greater demands of life and health. Allegheny County spends a million and a half annually on the improvement of its roads, and they need it. The State will appropriate next year \$50,000,000, and in the next three years

probably \$150,000,000 for road construction and improvement. The people are awake to the advantage of good roads and demand them. When the State and city see that the people are aroused and concerned in this far greater matter, so that it is a popular demand and a politic thing, our legislators will fall over one another in their efforts to make the needed appropriation. As long as the people are asleep and indifferent, understanding so little, and caring so little about this great work as to let the one institution in the city that aims to meet this crying need, and does meet it, so far as its resources go, in such a way as to be an example to other cities, to suffer for the want of adequate buildings and a few thousand dollars, the city and the State can hardly be expected to trouble themselves about it.

What then can we do? What is most needed? One man, Mr. Phipps, has promised \$35,000 on the condition that the amount is made up to \$125,000. Seventy thousand of this has been promised. Twenty thousand is needed before the amount can be claimed, which will give the larger and better buildings so much needed. Some of you out of your abundant means can help to complete this \$20,-000. We could easily give \$5,000 or \$10,000 from this parish and it would never be missed. Then there is another way to help. One of the most pressing needs at the hospital is an-"shack," with baths and sanitary arrangements. For the forty patients in the five "shacks" there is nothing nearer than the stable for men and the main building for women. You can easily understand what a serious disadvantage this is for sick people. It would cost \$1,200. I believe that we can do it. Perhaps some one of you would like to do it, as others have erected the other "shacks."

It would be a beautiful thing to do. I am sure that if we all make the effort we can do it, and I hope we will. Then we can all become contributing members of the Tuberculosis League, a band of about five hundred people contributing annually from \$5.00 to \$1,000, to whose efforts and gifts this work is largely due.* Every person here might, could, should become a supporter of this organization, and I hope you will all send in your names without delay. Take home the papers that have been placed in the pews, read every word in them, and then read them again, and come here next Sunday with a generous offering. Let us give this work a lift, a push, a pull, that will send it on its way with new impetus and increased momentum. When you go out of this house take a long, deep breath, open your lungs and fill them with the sweet blessed air, and thank God that you can breathe. Have you ever in your life thanked Him for the great boon of breathing without difficulty? Go down on your knees and do it tonight, and then give a thank offering for this blessing. When you lie down to sleep thank God that you can lay your head on your pillow, and not have to sit up night after night and gasp. When you go into the rooms of your little children and listen to their gentle, regular breathing, and see the flush of health on their faces, thank God that there are no signs of this dreadful disease among those whom you love.

Why do I bring this matter before you when already the parish is so heavily burdened, and

-15 -

^{*}The Pittsburgh League is a branch of the National Association for the Prevention and Cure of Tuberculosis, probably the largest voluntary charitable organization in the world. It ought to have 10,000 members in this city, and its power for good would be increased tenfold.

we have so many claims upon us that we can hardly meet them? Because I made the great mistake of going to see the work, and my eves were opened and I caught a glimpse of its imperative demands, its awful needs, its tremendous possibilities. It seemed to me that here was the strategic point in the great struggle of humanity; that here we were getting nearest to the source of its sufferings, the fountainhead of its woes; that our efforts here would have more influence and power for good than perhaps anywhere else. I hope that you will make the same mistake, and I am sure your eyes will be opened, your hearts touched, and you will feel the necessity laid upon you of doing what you can to help it on.

Then there was another and more personal reason. No one was kinder, sweeter, more helpful to me in my trouble, and to one whose troubles are ended, than the man who has planned and achieved this work, to whose ability and untiring labor its efficiency and success are greatly due, and who has carried the burden of it on his own shoulders while all the time making a brave fight with the foe for his own health and life. I wanted to do something to help him, and to please, if I might, one whose heart was always tender to the poor, and in the last days said often, as perhaps you will sometime say, "I wish that I had done more for the poor." I am sure that you will help too, and will join in the good fight against the great foe.

NOTE.—The city has appropriated \$240,000 for a Tuberculosis Hospital, with beds for 250 patients, to be built at Warner Station, and to be completed within a year. This is a great gain, and is due in great measure to the work of the Tuberculosis League in awakening public interest. The private charity has always to take the lead, to make the experiment, to show the results. The State and city follow after.

— 16—

TUBERCULOSIS LEAGUE OF PITTSBURGH

Report for Year, March 31, 1911, to March 31, 1912

Patients treated in Hospital	293
Patients treated in Dispensary	2,308
Patients treated in Babies' Dispensary (7	
months)	1,596
Patients treated in Open Air School	48
Patients treated on Farm	. 18
Patients treated by Visiting Nurse	2,183
Patients treated by Babies' Visiting Nurse	
(7 months)	1,640
Patients reported to Bureau of Health	227
Orphans examined	250
Lectures given in schools	496
People hearing lectures	30,186
Pamphlets distributed	20,816
Spit cups and other articles of protection	
distributed	14,931
050.6	
Cost of work for year\$52,64	5.16
Hospital cost per capita	1.76 2

TUBERCULOSIS LEAGUE
HOSPITAL AND DISPENSARY
BEDFORD AND WANDLESS STS.
